



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*Celebrating 25 Years of Advocacy & Achievement*

## COMMISSIONERS

Patricia Curry  
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Susan F. Friedman  
**Vice Chair**

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**Vice Chair**

Stacey Savelle  
**Vice Chair**

Carol O. Biondi  
Ann Franzen  
Helen A. Kleinberg  
Dr. La-Doris McClaney  
Rev. Cecil L. Murray  
Tina Pedersen, LCSW  
Sandra Rudnick  
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW  
Martha Trevino Powell  
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

## APPROVED MINUTES

A Special Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **December 7, 2009**, in the Board Room of the Optimist Youth Home, 6957 North Figueroa Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Patricia Curry	Tina Pedersen, LCSW
Carol O. Biondi	Stacey Savelle
Ann Franzen	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Susan F. Friedman	Martha Trevino Powell
Helen A. Kleinberg	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Rev. Cecil L. Murray	

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Sandra Rudnick
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 10:20 a.m.

#### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Self introductions were made.

#### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- **December 7, 2009**

#### **Action Taken:**

On motion of Vice Chair Savelle, seconded by Commissioner Kleinberg, the Agenda for December 7, 2009, was unanimously approved.

#### **IV. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Curry reported the following:

- The Chair and Vice Chairs Savelle and Friedman met with County Counsel to address questions regarding Brown Act compliance.

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**IV. CHAIR'S REPORT (Cont.)**

- The Commission for Children and Families' Office Room B-22 will no longer be staffed on a full-time basis. Staff support will be provided when meetings are conducted in the office or when Commissioners need to utilize the office. Advance notice to Commission Services is recommended to ensure the availability of staff support.
- Attended a meeting with the Children's Deputies and discussed if there was the need of continuing the Child Fatality Committee due to the creation of the Children's Special Investigation Unit. It was agreed that the Commission for Children and Families would invite the Probation Commission to form a committee in order to establish policies and procedures on reporting Probation child fatality cases to the Board. The Committee will be chaired by Commissioner Friedman, and once the policies/procedures are developed they will revisit the role of the Commission in reviewing child fatality cases.
- Commissioner Pedersen is resigning from the Commission to accept a new position with Westside Children's Center where she will be providing assistance to youths in the children services system. This is the last meeting that Commissioner Pederson will attend, and the Commission wishes her the best in all her future endeavors.

**V. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

- **Optimist Youth Panel Discussion**

Five youths from the Optimist Youth Home (Optimist) addressed the Commission to speak about their experiences as probation youths, their experiences in the different facilities in contrast to Optimist, and responded to questions posed by the Commission.

Each youth had experience in a probation camp and was currently living at Optimist Youth Home. Youth compared life at Optimist and at the camps and stated the following:

- Some of the youths came from camps in other parts of the County; the camps provide lots of exercise; they are concerned for personal safety; and there are lots of movies in school. No one cares about you; no one pays attention to the teacher; you don't learn anything. There is no peace, and it is difficult for families to visit; there is little contact with parents and/or siblings.
- In the Optimist home you learn to communicate with others, they insist on family visitation (Wednesday nights); you get privileges, and you can work on the grounds. People care about you and you learn to be patient and have self-respect.

Needs identified by the Director of Optimist include: 1) family visitation and communications; 2) aftercare planning and implementation 3) Education planning; and 4) securing a job in the community for the youth.

He added that there is an urgent need for more aftercare planning between the Probation Department and the private sector group homes, and noted that there are few agencies in Los Angeles who care exclusively for Probation youth. These young people need connection to family and community.

- **2008-2009 Annual Report**

Vice Chair Savelle made a motion to rescind Motion #2 (Item VI of November 16, 2009), striking the following sentence from the second paragraph in the *Child Fatality Committee* section: “While we identified systemic problems relative to these cases, we found obstacles in reporting the information to the Board.”, and adding the following sentence: **“We look forward to working with the Departments and CSIU, when the person is hired to work, towards implementation of these recommendations.”**

**Action Taken:**

On motion of Vice Chair Savelle, seconded by Commissioner Biondi, and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the revision to the 2008-2009 Annual Report.

**VI. COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS**

- **Missouri Model Update – Carol Biondi**

Commissioner Biondi reported that she and a delegation of County representatives (Departments of Probation, Mental Health, Chief Executive Office, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and the Justice Deputies of the five Supervisorial Districts) went to Kansas City, Missouri, to visit their model for juvenile justice/rehabilitation in locked residential facilities. Missouri sets the national model example as it has a sustaining recidivism of less than 8 percent. Missouri, in many experts’ opinion, has a highly successful system. The Missouri state system is relevant to the Los Angeles County system of housing youth in small groups in areas close to their community and rehabilitating their behavior, as opposed to punishing youths. The program costs half of Los Angeles County’s present system. Their success is attributed to a program directed on treatment rather than punishment. Missouri Youth Services offered to assist in the implementation of their methods to other facilities in the country. The CEO has requested that a report be prepared regarding the findings and impressions of the visit to Kansas and the Missouri Model.

A comparable environment is the facility in Santa Clara County where there’s been a 50% drop in recidivism and a 50% drop in facility incidents. An Alameda County facility will be utilizing the Missouri Model. The facility will not be guard-driven; it will be controlled by counselors who are college graduates specializing in Cognitive Behavior Treatment. There is a cost savings attributed to this program as the program will be staffed by counselors whose salary rates are less than those of guards.

**VI. COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS (Cont.)**

● **Missouri Model Update – Carol Biondi**

Commissioner Biondi provided copies of documents relating to models being used by other counties including that of the Missouri Model, and other statistical information ([Copies on file](#)).

**Action Taken:**

The Commission received and filed the presentation by Commissioner Biondi.

● **Childhood Wellness – Tina Pedersen/Nina Sorkin**

Commissioner Pedersen reported that the Childhood Wellness Committee accomplished their first year goal to enhance childhood wellness and decrease childhood obesity. Commission actively collaborated on the Child Wellness Policy that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on December 1, 2009 ([BOS Order No. 15](#)). In the coming year, the Committee will partner with the Faith Based and Relative Care Committees to promote healthy lifestyles. One of the objectives of the Board Policy is to provide training opportunities to caregivers.

The Committee's first activity (a Community Wellness & Healthy Lifestyle Training) will be held on December 10, 2009, at St. Andrews Catholic Church in Pasadena, CA. The training is aimed at improving the dietary and physical activity habits of participants with the goal of promoting the development of healthy lifestyles for children in care of relatives.

Training will be interactive providing caregivers opportunities to visit several stations that will offer different tools for developing healthy lifestyles. Measuring cups will be given to reinforce the importance of portion size, and nutritional snacks will be provided to participants to foster ideas on helping children try new healthy snacks and meals. The first training will be held in SPA 3, followed by five additional trainings that will be hosted by a different SPA each time. All trainings will be held at faith-based facilities.

Commissioner Sorkin will Chair the Childhood Wellness Committee after the departure of Commissioner Pedersen.

Commissioners Pedersen and Sorkin provided [copies](#) of the flyer to the Wellness & Healthy Lifestyle Training to be held on December 10, 2009 at St. Andrews Catholic Church, copies of the approved Board Order No. 15 of December 1, 2009, and the Committee Report dated December 7, 2009.

**Action Taken:**

The Commission received and filed the presentation by Commissioners Pedersen and Sorkin.

● **Visitation Report – Helen Kleinberg**

On motion of Commissioner Curry, this item was continued to the January 11, 2010, meeting.

**VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Ploehn reported the following:

- The budget forecast for FY 2010-11 reflects the depressed state of the economy. Countywide, they are projecting a deficit of approximately \$500 million for FY 2010-11, and a reduction of 9% is being considered Countywide in order to balance the budget.
- There is currently a hard freeze on hiring, with the exception of safety and other critical positions. The CEO has given approval to continue recruitment and hiring of Children's Social Workers.
- Bonuses are being reviewed for their viability, and efficiencies are being evaluated in order to cut costs, (i.e. conserving energy and supplies like paper and ink cartridges, etcetera).
- DCFS Deputy Ted Myers is retiring effective January 30, 2010, and Senior Deputy Director Susan Kerr is retiring effective February 14, 2010. A countywide bulletin recruiting replacements for both vacancies will be forthcoming.
- A new Public Information Officer (PIO) will be hired soon. Interviews for two more candidates will be conducted before an appointment is made.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public speakers.

**IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A gift was presented to Commissioner Pedersen as a token of the Commission's appreciation for her valuable service and dedication.

**X. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 12:07 p.m.